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COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
First session
12-23 April 1993
Agenda item 12

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Asrat BULBULA (Ethiopia)

Chapter ___

AD HOC PANELS/WORKSHOPS TO EXAMINE SPECIFIC ISSUES OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development considered item 5 of its agenda at its 12th and 13th meetings on 20 April 1993.

2. The Chief of the Science and Technology Branch of the Science, Technology, Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Economic and Social Development of the United Nations Secretariat, in introducing the item, briefly described the functions of ad hoc panels of experts in providing specialized advice on specific issues of science and technology for development to the former Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development. Document E/CN.16/1993/7 presented highlights of each of the 14 panels organized over the last 10 years. The Chief suggested that the Commission consider the possibility of continuing the practice of holding panels.

3. Members of the Commission made several main points during the debate. The importance of inter-sessional activities, given that the Commission was to meet only once every two years, was emphasized, as was the need to obtain expert advice through ad hoc panels on a few carefully selected themes. The composition of such panels should be small and include some members of the Commission, representatives of key agencies of the United Nations system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as identified top-quality outside experts.

4. While there was no doubt expressed regarding the value of the specialized work of the proposed panels the problem perceived was how to optimize their impact. Such optimization would involve the implementation capacity of the Commission, and effective dissemination of output.

5. It was observed that in the choosing of topics, other bodies and meetings planned on related topics within or outside the United Nations system could provide some options. Agencies of the United Nations system could also be requested to provide their suggestions.

6. It was also pointed out that linkages should be developed among the topics to be chosen in the next four years. The chosen themes should in turn deal with policy analysis, research and coordination.

7. It was observed that it would be better to convene the panels in developing countries so as to obtain a firsthand view of the situation of science and technology at the country level. Regional preparatory meetings on selected themes might be organized as input to the work of the Commission.

8. Concern was voiced over the uncertainty of resources available for organizing the panels. The importance of ensuring the funds for organizing the agreed number of panels was noted. The Secretary-General might be requested to make the necessary budgetary provisions. Possibilities of raising extrabudgetary funds for the organization of panels on those themes should also be pursued.

9. Some topics proposed for future panels included: (a) science and technology for ensuring food security; (b) environmentally sound technology for waste management; (c) science and technology in meeting the basic needs of population; and (d) application of science and technology in improving the productivity of the informal sector.

10. The representative of the American Institute of Physics addressed the Commission and emphasized the important role of science and technology in the culture of a nation. He proposed that the science and technology programme for development should have an accompanying educational programme dedicated to the objective of building a culture.

11. The representative of the World Association of Industrial and Technological Research Organizations (WAITRO) emphasized the important role of science and technology in the programme and activities of WAITRO. The ironic nature of the fact that science and technology funding in developing countries was decreasing while awareness of its importance was increasing was pointed out.

12. The representative of the Organizing Committee for the International Association of Technology Assessment and Forecasting Institutions (IATAFI) noted that IATAFI was currently being established under the auspices of the United Nations. The goal of IATAFI was to establish international cooperation, joint projects and information exchanges with a particular emphasis on linking activities in the developed countries with those in the developing ones.

13. In responding to the deliberations of Commission members, the Chief of the Science and Technology Branch emphasized the relationship that existed between

thematic activities and the future work of the Commission. He provided clarification on the subject of science and technology for the meeting of basic needs and on that of the continuing validity of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development.

14. In summary, the Chairman stressed that it was essential for the Commission to obtain adequate resources and expert advice for its work. He felt that in order to maximize the catalytic impact of the Commission's work, relationships with other entities within the United Nations system and with the non-United Nations system organizations concerned must be cultivated and maintained.